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The Sale of Saint Thomas

The Sale of Saint Thomas

in Six Acts

by

Lascelles Abercrombie

1931

London: Martin Secker

NOTE

The first act of *The Sale of Saint Thomas* appeared, under that title, as a small pamphlet publisht by the author in 1911. The original intention is now completed by the addition of the acts here printed for the first time.

L. A.

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TO

ARTHUR RANSOME

MY FRIEND

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The Tradition

When, for the gospelling of the world, the Apostles sorted the countries among themselves, the lot of India fell to Thomas. After some hesitations, he obeyed the lot, being shamed thereto by his Master, as is here set forth.

The Persons

Judas Thomas, the Apostle.
Abbanes, a Ship's Captain.
Gundaphorus, King of India.
Prince *Gad,* his brother, the Treasurer.
Mardes, the King's Physician.

The Acts

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I

An Arabian Port. A Quay, With Vessels Moored

Thomas. To India ! Yea, here I may take ship ;
From here the courses go over the seas,
Along which the intent prows wonderfully
Nose like lean hounds, and track their journeys out,
Making for harbours as some sleuth was laid
For them to follow on their shifting road.
Again I front my appointed ministry.—
But why the Indian lot to me ? Why mine
Such fearful gospelling ? For the Lord knew
What a frail soul he gave me, and a heart
Lame and unlikely for the large events.—
And this is worse than Baghdad ! though that was
A fearful brink of travel. But if the lots,
That gave to me the Indian duty, were
Shuffled by the unseen skill of heaven, surely
That fear of mine in Baghdad was the same
Marvellous Hand working again, to guard
The landward gate of India from me. There
I stood, waiting in the weak early dawn
To start my journey ; the great caravan's
Strange cattle with their snoring breaths made steam

Upon the air, and (as I thought) sadly
The beaſts at market-booths and awnings gay
Of shops, the city's comfortable trade,
Lookt, and then into months of plodding lookt.
And swiftly on my brain there came a wind
Of vision ; and I saw the road mapt out
Along the desert with a chalk of bones ;
I saw a famine and the Afghan greed
Waiting for us, spears at our throats, all we
Made women by our hunger ; and I saw
Gigantic thirſt grieving our mouths with duſt,
Scattering up against out breathing salt
Of blown dried dung, until the aching taſte
Like fiery vinegar ate into our marrows ;
And a sudden decay thicken'd all our bloods
As rotten leaves in fall will baulk a ſtream ;
Then my kill'd life the muncht food of jackals.—
The wind of vision died in my brain ; and lo,
The jangling of the caravan's long gait
Was small as the luting of a breeze in grass
Upon my ears. Into the waiting thirſt
Camels and merchants all were gone, while I
Had been in my amazement. Was this not
A sign ? God with a vision tript me, leſt
Those tall fiends that ken for my approach
In middle Asia, Thirſt and his grisly band
Of plagues, should with their brigand fingers ſtop
His message in my mouth. Therefore I said,
If India is the place where I muſt preach,
I am to go by ship, not overland.

And here my ship is bertht. But worse, far worse
Than Baghdad, is this roadſtead : the brown sails,
All the enginery of going on sea,
The tackle and the rigging, tholes and sweeps,
The prows built to put by the waves, the maſts
Stayed for a hurricane ; and lo, that line
Of gilded water there ! the sun has drawn
In a long narrow band of shining oil
His light over the sea ; how evilly move
Ripples along that golden skin !—the gleam
Works like a muscular thing ! like the half-gorged
Sleepy swallowing of a serpent's neck.
The sea lives, surely ! My eyes swear to it ;
And, like a murderous smile that glimpses through
A villain's courtesy, that twitching dazzle
Parts the kind mood of weather to bewray
The feaſted waters of the sea, ſtretcht out
In lazy gluttony, expecting prey.
How fearful is this trade of sailing ! Worse
Than all land-evils is the water-way
Before me now.—What, cowardice ? Nay, why
Trouble myself with ugly words ? 'Tis prudence,
And prudence is an admirable thing.
Yet here's much cost,—these packages piled up,
Ivory doubtless, emeralds, gums, and silks,
All these they truſt on shipboard ?—Ah, but I,
I who have seen God, I to put myself
Amid the heathen outrage of the sea
In a deal-wood box ! It were plain folly.
There is naught more precious in the world than I :

I carry God in me, to give to men ;
And when has the sea been friendly unto man ?
Let it but guess my errand, it will call
The dangers of the air to wreak upon me,
Winds to juggle the puny boat and pinch
The water into unbelievable creases.
And shall my soul, and God in my soul, drown ?
Or venture drowning ?—But no, no ; I am safe.
Smooth as believing souls over their deaths
And over agonies shall slide henceforth
To God, so shall my way be blest amid
The quiet crouching terrors of the sea,
Like panthers when a fire weakens their hearts ;
Ay, this huge sin of nature, the salt sea,
Shall be afraid of me, and of the mind
Within me, that with gesture, speech and eyes
Of the Messiah flames. What element
Dare snarl against my going, what incubus dare
Remember to be fiendish, when I light
My whole being with memory of Him ?
The malice of the sea will slink from me,
And the wind be harmless as a muzzled wolf ;
For I am a torch, and the flame of me is God.
A Ship's Captain. You are my man, my passenger ?
Thomas. I am.
I go to India with you.
Captain. Well, I hope so.
There's threatening in the weather. Have you a mind
To hug your belly to the slanted deck,
Like a louse on a whip-top, when the boat

Spins on an axle in the hissing gales ?
Thomas. Fear not. 'Tis likely indeed that ſtorms are now
Plotting againſt our voyage ; ay, no doubt
The very bottom of the sea prepares
To ſtand up mountainous or reach a limb
Out of his night of water and huge shingles,
That he and the waves may break our keel. Fear not ;
Like those who manage horses, I've a word
Will faſten up within their evil natures
The meanings of the winds and waves and reefs.
Captain. You have a talisman ? I have one too ;
I know not if the ſtorms think much of it.
I may be shark's meat yet. And would your spell
Be daunting to a cuttle, think you now ?
We had a bout with one on our way here ;
It had green lidless eyes like lanterns, arms
As many as the branches of a tree,
But limber, and each one of them wise as a snake.
It laid hold of our bulwarks, and with three
Long knowing arms, slimy, and of a flesh
So tough they'ld fool a hatchet, searcht the ship,
And ſtole out of the midſt of us all a man ;
Yes, and he the proudeſt man upon the seas
For the rare powerful talisman he'd got.
And would yours have done better ?
Thomas. I am one
Not easily frightened. I'm for India.
You will not put me from my way with talk.
Captain. My heart, I never thought of frightening you.—
Well, here's both tide and wind, and we may not ſtart.

Thomas. Not start? I pray you, do.
Captain. It's no use praying;
I dare not. I've not half my cargo yet.
Thomas. What do you wait for, then?
Captain. A carpenter.
Thomas. You are talking strangely.
Captain. But not idly.
I might as well broach all my blood at once
Here as I stand, as sail to India back
Without a carpenter on board;—O strangely
Wise are our kings in the killing of men!
Thomas. But does your king then need a carpenter?
Captain. Yes, for he dreamed a dream; and like a man
Who, having eaten poison, and with all
Force of his life turned out the crazing drug,
Has only a weak and wrestled nature left
That gives in foolishly to some bad desire
A healthy man would laugh at; so our king
Is left desiring by his venomous dream.
But, being a king, the whole land aches with him.
Thomas. What dream was that?
Captain. A palace made of souls;—
Ay, there's a folly for a man to dream!
He saw a palace covering all the land,
Big as the day itself, made of a stone
That answered with a better gleam than glass
To the sun's greeting, fashioned like the sound
Of laughter copied into shining shape:
So the king said. And with him in the dream
There was a voice that fleered upon the king:

" This is the man who makes much of himself
For filling the common eyes with palaces
Gorgeously bragging out his royalty :
Whereas he hath not one that seemeth not
In work, in height, in poſture on the ground,
A hut, a peasant's dingy shed, to mine.
And all his excellent woods, metals, and ſtones,
The things he's filcht out of the earth's old pockets
And hoised up into walls and domes ; the gold,
Ebony, agate ſtairs, wainscots of jade,
The windows of jargoon, and heavenly lofts
Of marble, all the ſtuff he takes to be wealth,
Reckons like savage mud and wattle againſt
The matter of my building."—And the king,
Gloating upon the white sheen of that palace,
And weeping like a girl ashamed, required
" What is that ſtone ? " And the voice answered him,
" Soul." " But in my palaces too," said he,
" There should be soul built : I have driven nations,
What with quarrying, what with craning, down
To death, and sure their souls ſtay in my work."
And, " Mud and wattle " sneered the voice again ;
But added, " In the weſt there is a man,
A slave, a carpenter, whose heart has been
Apprenticed to the skill that built my reign,
This beauty ; and were he maſter of your gangs,
He'ld build you a palace that would look like mine."—
So now no ship may sail from India,
Since the king's scornful dream, unless it bring
A carpenter among its homeward lading :

And carpenters are getting hard to find.
Thomas. And have none made for the king his desire?
Captain. Many have tried, with roaſting living men
In queer huge kilns, and other sleights, to found
A glass of human souls; and others seek
With marvellous ſtone to please our desperate king.
Always at laſt their own tormented bodies
Delight the cruelty of the king's heart.
Thomas. Well, then, I hope you'll find your carpenter,
And soon. I would not that we wait too long;
I loathe a dallying journey.—I should suppose
We'ld have good sailing at this season, now?
Captain. Why, you were looking, a few minutes gone,
For rare wild ſtorms: I hope we'll have them too;
I want to see you work that talisman
You boaſt about: I've a great love for spells.
Thomas. Let it be ſtorm or calm, so we be sailing.
I long have wisht to voyage into midsea,
To give my senses reſt from wondering
On this perplexèd grammar of the land
Written in men and women, the ſtrange trees,
Herbs, and those things so like to souls, the beaſts.
My wilful senses will keep perilously
Employed with these my brain, and weary it
Still to be asking. But on the high seas
Such throng'd reality is left behind,—
Only vaſt air and water, and the hue
That always seems like special news of God.
Surely 'tis half way to eternity
To go where only size and color live;

And I could purify my mind from all
Worldly amazement by imagining
Beyond my senses into God's great Heaven,
If I were in midsea. I have dreamed of this.
Wondrous too, I think, to sail at night,
While shoals of moonlight flickers dance beside,
Like swimming glee of fishes scaled in gold,
Curvetting in thwart bounds over the swell;
The perceiving flesh, in bliss of such a beauty,
Must sure feel fine as spiritual sight.—
Moods have been on me, too, when I would be
Sailing recklessly through wild darkness, where
Gigantic whispers of a harasst sea
Fill the whole world of air, and I stand up
To breast the danger of the loosen'd sky,
And feel my immortality like music,—
Yea, I alone in the broken world, firm things
All gone to monstrous flurry, knowing myself
An indestructible word spoken by God.—
This is a small, small boat?

Captain. Small is nothing.
A bucket will do, so it know how to ride
Top upward: cleverness is the thing in boats.
And I wish this were cleverer: she goes crank
At times just when she should go sober most.
But what? Boats are but girls for whimsies: men
Must let them have their freaks.

Thomas. Have you good skill
In seamanship?

Captain. Well, I am not drowned yet,

Though I'm a grey man and have been at sea
Longer than you've been walking. My old sight
Can tell Mizar from Alcor still.
Thomas. Ay, so;
Doubtless you'll bring me safe to India.
But being there—tell me now of the land:
How use they strangers there?
Captain. Queerly, sometimes.
If the king's moody, and tired of feeling nerves
Mildly made happy with soft jewel of silk,
Odours and wines and slim lascivious girls,
And yearns for sharper thrills to pierce his brain,
He often finds a stranger handy then.
Thomas. Why, what do you mean?
Captain. There was a merchant came
To Travancore, and could not speak our talk;
And, it chanced, he was brought before the throne
Just when the king was weary of sweet pleasures.
So, to better his tongue, a rope was bent
Beneath his oxters, up he was hauled, and fire
Let singe the soles of his feet, until his legs
Wriggled like frying eels; then the king's dogs
Were set to hunt the hirpling man. The king
Laught greatly and cried, "But give the dogs words
they know,
And they'll be tame."—Have you the Indian speech?
Thomas. Not yet: it will be given me, I trust.
Captain. You'd best make sure of the gift. Another strange
Who swore he knew of better gods than ours,
Seemed to the king troubled with fleas, and slaves

Were told to groom him smartly, which they did
Thoroughly with steel combs, until at last
They curried the living flesh from off his bones
And stript his face of gristle, till he was
Skull and half skeleton and yet alive.
You're not for dealing in new gods?

Thomas. Not I.
Was the man killed?

Captain. He lived a little while;
But the flies killed him.

Thomas. Flies? I hope India
Is not a fly-plagued land? I abhor flies.

Captain. You will see strange ones, for our Indian life
Hath wonderful fierce breeding. Common earth
With us quickens to buzzing flights of wings
As readily as a week-old carcase here
Thrown in a sunny marsh. Why, we have wasps
That make your hornets seem like pretty midges;
And there be flies in India will drink
Not only blood of bulls, tigers, and bears,
But pierce the river-horses' creasy leather,
Ay, worry crocodiles through their cuirasses
And prick the metal fishes when they bask.
You'll feel them soon, with beaks like sturdy pins,
Treating their stinging thirsts with your best blood.
A man can't walk a mile in India
Without being the business of a throng'd
And moving town of flies: they hawk at a man
As bold as little eagles, and as wild.
And, I suppose, only a fool will blame them.

Flies have the right to sink wells in our skin
All as men to bore parcht earth for water.
But I must do a job on board, and then
Search the town afresh for a carpenter.

Thomas (*alone*). Ay, loose tongue, I know how thou art prompted.
Satan's cunning device thou art, to sap
My heart with chatter'd fears. How easy it is
For a stiff mind to hold itself upright
Against the cords of devilish suggestion
Tackled about it, though kept downward strained
With sly, masterful winches made of fear.
Yea, when the mind is warned what engines mean
To ply it into grovelling, and thought set firm,
The tugging strings fail like a cobweb-stuff.
Not as in Baghdad is it with me now;
Nor canst thou, Satan, by a prating mouth
Fell my tall purpose to a flatlong scorn.
I can divide the check of God's own hand
From tempting such as this: India is mine!—
Ay, fiend, and if thou utter thy storming heart
Into the ocean sea, as into mob
A rebel utters turbulence and rage,
And raise before my path swelling barriers
Of hatred soul'd in water, yet will I strike
My purpose, and God's purpose, clean through all
The ridges of thy power. And I will show
This mask that the devil wears, this old shipman,
A thing to make his proud heart of evil
Writhe like a trodden snake; yea, he shall see

How godly faith can go upon the huge
Fury of forces bursting out of law,
Easily as a boy goes on windy grass.—
O marvel! that my little life of mind
Can by mere thinking the unsizeable
Creature of sea enslave! I must believe it.
The mind hath many powers beyond name
Deep womb'd within it, and can shoot strange vigors:
Men there have been who could so grimly look
That soldiers' hearts went out like candle flames
Before their eyes, and the blood perisht in them.—
But I—could I do that? Would I not feel
The power in me if 'twas there? And yet
'Twere a child's game to what I have to do,
For days and days with sleepless faith oppress
And terrorize the demon sea. I think
A man might, as I saw my Master once,
Pass unharmed through a storm of men, yet fail
At this that lies before me: men are mind,
And mind can conquer mind; but how can it quell
The unappointed purpose of great waters?—
Well, say the sea is past: why, then I have
My feet but on the threshold of my task,
To gospel India,—my single heart
To seize into the order of its beat
All the strange blood of India, my brain
To lord the dark thought of that tann'd mankind!—
O, horrible those sweltry places are,
Where the sun comes so close, it makes the earth
Burn in a frenzy of breeding,—smoke and flame

Of lives burning up from agoniz'd loam !
Those monſtrous sappy jungles of clutcht growth,
Enormous weed hugging enormous weed,
What can such fearful increase have to do
With prospering bounty ? A rage works in the ground,
Incurably, like frantic lechery,
Pouring its passion out in crops and spawns.
'Tis as the mighty spirit of life, that here
Walketh beautifully praising, glad of God,
Should, ſtepping on the poison'd Indian shore,
Breathing the Indian air of fire and ſteam,
Fling herself into a craze of hideous dancing,
The green gown whipping her swift limbs, all her body
Writhen to speak inutterable desire,
Tormented by a glee of hating God.
Nay, it muſt be, to visit India,
That frantic pomp and hurrying forth of life,
As if a man should enter at unawares
The dreaming mind of Satan, gorgeously
Imagining his eternal hell of luſt.—
They say the land is full of apes, which have
Their own gods and worship ; how ghaſtly, this !—
That demons (for it muſt be so) should build,
In mockery of man's upward faith, the souls
Of monkeys, those lewd mammets of mankind,
Into a dreadful farce of adoration !
And flies ! a land of flies ! where the hot soil
Foul with ceaseless decay ſteams into flies !
So thick they pile themselves in the air above
Their meal of filth, they seem like breathing heaps

Of formless life mounded upon the earth;
And buzzing always like the pipes and strings
Of solemn music made for sorcerers.—
I abhor flies,—to see them stare upon me
Out of their little faces of gibbous eyes;
To feel the dry cool skin of their bodies alight
Perching upon my lips!—O yea, a dream,
A dream of impious obscene Satan, this
Monstrous frenzy of life, the Indian being!
And there are men in the dream! What men are they?
I've heard, naught relishes their brains so much
As to tie down a man and teaze his flesh
Infamously, until a hundred pains
Hound the desiring life out of his body,
Filling his nerves with such a fearful zest
That the soul overstrained shatters beneath it.
Must I preach God to these murderous hearts?
I would my lot had fallen to go and dare
Death from the silent dealing of Northern cold!—
O, but I would face all these Indian fears,
The horror of the huge power of life,
The beasts all fierce and venomous, the men
With cruel souls, learnèd to invent pain,
All these and more, if I had any hope
That, braving them, Lord Christ prosper'd through me.
If Christ desired India, he had sent
The band of us, solder'd in one great purpose,
To strike his message through those dark vast tribes.
But one man!—O surely it is folly,
And we misread the lot! One man, to thrust,

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Even though in his soul the lamp was kindled
At God's own hands, one man's lit soul to thrust
The immense Indian darkness out of the world !
For human flesh there breeds as furiously
As the green things and the cattle ; and it is all,
All this enormity of measureless folk,
Penn'd in a land so close to the devil's reign
The very apes have faith in him.—No, no :
Impetuous brains mistake the signs of God
Too easily. God would not have me waste
My zeal for him in this wild enterprise
Of going alone to swarming India ;—one man,
One mortal voice, to charm those myriad ears
Away from the fiendish clamor of Indian gods,
One man preaching the truth against the huge
Bray of the gongs and horns of the Indian priests !
A cup of wine poured in the sea were not
More surely lost in the green and brackish depths,
Than the fire and fragrance of my doctrine poured
Into that multitudinous pond of men,
India.—Shipman ! Master of the ship !—
I have thought better of this journey ; now
I find I am not meant to go.

Captain. Not meant ?

Thomas. I would say, I had forgotten Indian air
Is full of fevers ; and my health is bad
For holding out against fever.

Captain. As you please.
I keep your fare, though.

Thomas. O, 'tis yours.—Good sailing !

As he makes to depart, a Noble Stranger is seen approaching along the quay.

Captain. Well, here's a marvel: 'tis a king, for sure!
'Twould take the taxes of a world to dress
A man in that silken gold, and all those gems.
What a flash the light makes of him; nay, he burns;
And he's here on the quay all by himself,
Not even a slave to fan him!—Man, you're ailing!
You look like death; is it the falling sickness?
Or has the mere thought of the Indian journey
Made your marrow quail with a cold fever?

The Stranger (to the Captain). You are the master of this ship?

Captain. I am.

Stranger. This huddled man belongs to me: a slave
Escaped my service.

Captain. Lord, I knew not that.
But you are in good time.

Stranger. And was the slave
For putting out with you? Where are you bound?

Captain. To India. First he would sail, and then
Again he would not. But, my Lord, I swear
I never guesst he was a runaway.

Stranger. Well, he shall have his mind and go with you
To India: a good slave he is, but bears
A restless thought. He has slipt off before,
And vexes me still to be watching him.
We'll make a bargain of him.

Captain. I, my Lord?
I have no need of slaves: I am too poor.

Stranger. For twenty silver pieces he is yours.
Captain. That's cheap, if he has skill. Yes, there might be
Profit in him at that. Has he a trade?
Stranger. He is a carpenter.
Captain. A carpenter!
Why, for a good one I'ld give all my purse.
Stranger. No, twenty silver pieces is the price;
Though 'tis a slave a king might joy to own.
I've taught him to imagine palaces
So high, and tower'd so nobly, they might seem
The marvelling of a God-delighted heart
Escaping into ecstasy; he knows,
Moreover, of a stuff so rare it makes
Smaragdus and the dragon-stone despised;
And yet the quarries whereof he is wise
Would yield enough to house the tribes of the world
In palaces of beautiful shining work.
Captain. Lo there! why, that is it: the carpenter
I am to bring is needed for to build
The king's new palace.
Stranger. Yea? He is your man.
Captain. Come on, my man. I'll put your cunning heels
Where they'll not budge more than a shuffled inch.
My lord, if you'll bide with the rascal here,
I'll get the irons ready. Here's your sum.—
Stranger. Now, Thomas, know thy sin. It was not fear;
Easily may a man crouch down for fear,
And yet rise up on firmer knees, and face
The hailing storm of the world with graver courage.
But prudence, prudence is the deadly sin,

And one that groweth deep into a life,
With hardening roots that clutch about the breaſt.
For this refuseth faith in the unknown powers
Within man's nature; shrewdly bringeth all
Their inspiration of ſtrange eagerness
To a judgement bought by safe experience;
Narrows desire into the scope of thought.
But it is written in the heart of man,
Thou shalt no larger be than thy desire.
Thou muſt not therefore ſtoop thy spirit's sight
To pore only within the candle-gleam
Of conscious wit and reasonable brain;
But search into the sacred darkness lying
Outside thy knowledge of thyself, the vaſt
Measureless fate, full of the power of ſtars,
The outer noiseless heavens of thy soul.
Keep thy desire closed in the room of light
The labouring fires of thy mind have made,
And thou shalt find the vision of thy spirit
Pitifully dazzled to so shrunk a ken,
There are no spacious puissances about it.
But send desire often forth to scan
The immense night which is thy greater soul;
Knowing the possible, see thou try beyond it
Into impossible things, unlikely ends;
And thou shalt find thy knowledgeable desire
Grow large as all the regions of thy soul,
Whose firmament doth cover the whole of Being,
And of created purpose reach the ends.

II

On Shipboard

Midsea, midnight:
And a half-moon's light
Insisting gently
Through hazes of the lower air;
Uncertainly and faintly
With a pearly glamour everywhere
Sleeking the great black motion
Of the perpetually marching ocean;
Touching with silvery grey
Inquisitive delicacy
The hissing ghost of spray
The prow puts sturdily by
In its bluff onward way;
And hard to say
As in the region of a dream,
If on the deck, under the steady sails
That tower into disappearing height,
Shadow it is that falls, or gleam:
Gleam that like dusk of shadow veils,
Or shadow that can blanch like light.

Into the colorless magic of this hour

Thomas (for leave his friendly master gave
To roam the ship) came from below, and saw
High on the poop, standing his watch alone,
Abbanes like a shining apparition;
And in the misty sheen of pale bright air
Round him, the shapes of things seemed to be slipping
From off their secret spirits.—Was he alone?
Had they escaped already, the wanton spirits
Hid in the staid familiar daylight shapes
Of gear and furniture, timber and tackle?
Or were they imps that no allegiance owed
To things, those darting small activities,
Gleam in the shadow, shadow in the gleam,
That round the captain on his quarterdeck
Raced on the bulwarks, up the ropes and down,
In and out of moonlight? Thomas, his heart
Beating a moment's shudder of chill'd blood,
Went staring nearer, and heard the murmuring man
Talk to his romping little visitors.

Abbanes. Quicker, quicker! This is nothing!
Stir, you scoundrels, stir!
Be nimble now, you dropsical rogues,
You scandalous paunches, stir!
Why, in many a world the people
Never can glimpse the god that owns 'em;
But solidly here, talking and visible,
Stands your god—I who have launcht
This sailing world for you, so that my rats,
Safe in the midst of unspeakable water,

May nest and multiply, happy and gluttonous.
And have I not set it in poles upright,
Furnisht with cords and pieces of canvas,
All for my rats when nights are pleasant
To show their joy in a skeltering game?
Be nimble, then! Declare it is good
To be rats alive, so that I too
Confess it is good to be god of the rats.
Speed, you lethargies! Make my heart dizzy!
Follow-my-leader up to the peak,
Tight-rope along the mainsail edge,
Then round the truck and headlong down
The haliards fling, and across the deck
In a canter, and up to the peak again!
Ay, now we are shifting: but quicker, quicker!

Thomas. Why, they are rats! The rats of the ship broke loose,
And the ship's captain taking his mood from them!—
But it is all of a piece. Now I have plain
The truth: the sign of it is given me now
Past all mistake. I came up here in hope
To send my thought out of my aching mind
At large into a night of sea and stars:
Out of the ceaseless wheeling of my mind
To free the trampling thought that drives it round,
Like slavery shut in a turning treadmill
To trudge unending stairs and get no higher.
And here's my freedom: this is the world for me!
Night that is all a glimmering phantom of mist,

Crazing the look of things, and bringing out
The shameless vermin in a gambolling dance.
I know the sign ; and I must take its meaning :
I am the one sane mind left reasoning
Against the drift of a world of mischievous nonsense.
And little good to reason ! There behold
The genius of my affairs ! my owner,
The man in charge of me and of my mission,
Solemnly playing the jape of a fool
In a squealing mutiny of the ship's rats !—
But I will face it out ; I'll test it home,
This lunatic fortune that has hold of me.

But soon as Thomas stept on the captain's deck
The rats were all aloft—sharp as a man
Can snap his fingers, their blithe scampering
Familiarity around Abbanes
Changed to a motionless and watchful pause ;
And in the stillness of their clustering
Along the yards and up the lines of rigging,
Their lively bodies vanisht into shadow.
But where the half-light in a sparkle caught
The keen suspicion of their small round eyes,
It filled the height of gear about the mast
With glinting little jewels, green and red :
Like a tall tree in fairyland, that bears
Amid grey twilight of the forest there,
In breathless secrecy of spectral leaves,
Berries of emerald and carbuncle.
But when they found Thomas meant nothing more

Than harmless talk, in twos and threes the rats
Crept venturing down the ropes head-first ; and soon
The pace of the game went round again full speed,
With a shrill delight and a rustle of rapid paws
On hemp or sailcloth, and across the planks
A pattering gallop : merrily up from the deck
They lept into the cordage, and went wild
Above the heads of the two talking men.

Thomas. Well, you keep pretty company up here.
Abbanes. Better than you will keep in India.
Thomas. That I believe. Mine were an easy gospel,
If India would listen like your rats !
Abbanes. Ay, and a thriving one, if it would give
Your Indians what my gospel gives my rats.
Thomas. So that's the drollery ! A gospel, is it ?
Making a game of mine ?
Abbanes. What, none but you
May have a gospel ?—O, the word is yours,
But the thing's old with me. And as for games,
You and your handsome master are the men :
Fine game you made of me, selling me cheap
A carpenter, and foisting on me—You !
My turn will come, though, when I see you stand
Gospelling India, dodging Indian dung
And Indian stones ; and you'll remember then
(As agony very often in a glance
Of helpless envy looks back on things past)—
You with your dry tongue tasting on your lips
The salt of sweat and blood, while the crowd yells

Abominating you—you will remember
How in the sleeping ship at white midnight,
In vast quiet of midsea noise, you found
Me at my gospel, and the swarm of glee
Revelling in it.

Thomas. A swarm of happy vermin!

Abbanes. Why not? Rats are as good as men for this.
Look at them! Tell me what more men could give
Their gospeller than these? and what have men
Done to deserve a godsend more than rats?—
The mood comes on me; and till I satisfy it,
Nothing will do: I must be more than myself!
So first I find the cat, and lock him up,
(Ay, will your gospel do as much for men?)
Then take my watch. They know! My rascals know
What I have done for them! And up they come
Delighting as I bid them in the world
I have made perfect for them; and I stand here,
Lord of their lives, who put the fiend in prison,
And become their rejoicing: I become
More than myself, yet more myself than ever,
Joy of so many creatures being mine.—
Why, it can't last: it's a wise gospeller
Who knows how far to let his gospel go.
I shipt a cargo of cheeses once—and all
The rats in dock beside: they troopt on board
In nations, and the hawsers the whole night
Were simply highways—I and the gloating cat
Enjoying it like a show, welcoming them
Like hosts at a party. O, that cat of mine,

He was a murderer! Never was there god,
Not even yours, served by such a demon!
And he went overboard; the swing of the boom
Caught him crack in a squall, and left the rats
In paradise. And what was the end of that?
I lost my lading: it was the joke of the day
For the whole port, but a dear joke for me,
To watch the stevedores toss empty rinds,
Eaten as hollow as tubs, on to the quays,
Like strong professors when the fair is done
Chucking aside the bulks that lookt like weight.
And for the rats a good half of the voyage
Was pining snarling famine. Think on that,
In case, when the king's viewed your carpentry,
What's left of you has still a mind for preaching:
Gospels are things to live for, not live on!
They make good holidays, but ruinous business.
And high time now I gave my fasting fiend
His morning massacre: it is long enough
He has been hungering patiently in my cabin.
You'll see him scout these raptures. And what then?
The rats have had their blissful hour, and I
Am satisfied: I have been more than myself!

Thomas went forward moodily, and leant,
Propt on his planted elbows, over the bows,
Letting the sullen smoulder of his thought
Consume perception—all the adorable gifts
His senses offered him: nothing to him,
That arching back from either side the prow

The snowy grace of cloven water flasht
Like fables of the dolphin's milk, in falls
Of liquid jewels, that continually
Kindled in little flares of sapphire lightning ;
Nor could his ears enchant him with the sound
Of furrowed waves, the passion of his mood
Was so intent on burning into thought.

" All of a piece ! There's some unholy force
Of madness ſtreaming through the work of the world ;
And I am caught in it, like a tired swimmer
Towed coaſting paſt his shore and out to sea
By an invisible race of mighty water.
Firſt I am sent to India, I alone
To gospel India : as likely a task
As if a man should go among wild bees
And bid them mind the ſtars. And that's not half :
For to make sure I see myself a figure
Impersonating an impossible ſtory,
I am shipt to India to serve a dream
Some black-faced and black-minded majeſty
Ridiculously doats on there : shipt off
Simply like an animal-dealer's bargain,
To amuse this languid demon of a king
With tricks of a performing man, as men
Curiously teaze an intelligent beaſt
To agonize for them in unheard-of antics.
I am to build a palace made of souls !—
A childish riddle, if the dream were mine :
How plausible it sounds ! How nicely it seems

In my affairs to insinuate its meaning !
But lunacy can be very plausible ;
And there is always meaning in a dream,
As one may read the patience of a lion
In the crouching of a rock, or think a mountain
Looks at the morning with the indignant face
Of a giant's grievance, while a by-stander
Finds no such thing. Not to please my fancy
Am I to build the palace made of souls :
But to divert the glooming of a king,
The tedious perfection of whose power
Has bred the spleen of a devil ; guess what absurd
Infernal impulse of his Indian heart
Fashioned that vision in his insane slumber—
There is the crazy task I must go through
Before I touch my destiny, and give
The loathsome life of India my gospel :
This brainless captain will make sure of that !
He has no notion of losing money by me ;
He'll carry out his deal, and gaily leave me
Slaving to earn fantastical damnation :
As good a joke to him as playing god
To the ship's rats in their midnight giddy-go-round."

By this the moisture of the night had changed
To golden haze like some corpuscular light ;
And now thinn'd upward from the sea in long
Smokes of vanishing gleam, and left clear air
And open radiance of the setting moon,
That in the golden hour of her departure

Glowed like the forging of a scimitar
Between the shining water and a cloud
Illuſtrious as the links of ſteel chain-mail
Reflecting fire. But far aloft the ſtars,
Like ancient tribes returning to their power
After an alien empire's fall, once more
In myriad cryſtals of white flame declared
Their infinite miracle. Thomas, his mind
Faſt in its private conſciousness of mood,
Knew nothing of the altering of the night;
But bodily inſtinct noted it, and moved
Unconscious vision aſcertaining upward.
Then the transition was in him. On him
All that quiet splendor came descending;
The fabric of his thought from off his mind
Shrivel'd and broke like brittle ash of paper;
And to each particle of heaven, to each
Ray of them all, howe'er minutely keen,
In nakedness of pure experience
Sensitive as a nerve to something piercing,
He was aware of himself in all his nature
Gazing at that eternity of ſtars.
And suddenly he was among them; juſt as a boy,
Watching the flight of martins to and fro,
Almoſt before he knows himself in love
With such a life, suddenly finds himself
One with them, his their joy and his joy theirs,
Unearthly ease gliding the air on wings:
So into the society of ſtars
The spirit of Thomas enter'd, sharing joy.

They showed him beauty: what was that but joy
Their being knew translated into his?
Must not the joy his being knew be theirs?
Must it not be for them some lovely portion
Of all the beauty in which they lived?—For them?
Nay, for the sum of all things possible,
For the whole world's eternal ecstasy
Of mutual enjoyment! But to be loved
As beauty in this essence of the world,
He must be spirit in love with the beauty of it:
"More than myself I must be, more than myself!—
Who taught me that? Abbanes, was it thou?—
More than myself I must be? More than myself?
Ay, till the kingdom of heaven is within me,
And the King in his kingdom is one with me!
For by how much I can be more than myself,
By so much am I more myself than ever;
And this can reach perfection: when I am
The charity that includes all things in me,
And knows that in the life all things enjoy
I am included: and my delighted life
Is my experience of the vast of things
Delighting in experience of me:
The fires above the air, and the air's motion,
Clouds in it, and the noble art of birds,
The voices and the curving plunge of water
And its green glass of placid depth beneath,
The lustrous poise and cruising of the fishes,
The mineral earth, the growth of moss and forest,
And the whole people of beasts and wilful men—

I of them all partaking, they of me :
I in my place in the infinite company
Of things whose life rejoices to be God ;
Since life for all is what each gives to each,
Which is the nature of God and the kingdom of heaven
I am the man for India now ! Let come
What will now, I am spirit in love with it ;
I give myself to everything, even to horror,
Knowing that by the gift I change its feature
As morning changes darkness into color ;
And even that delirium, India,
Will give me back my gift in spectacle
Of beauty for the eyes of all my being :
Multitudes in one shapely spire of light
Transfigured to the love of my Beloved.
" And now what else, now I belong to the world
As the ship's course according to the wind
Strikes through the sea ? To India blows the wind !
The event moves on, and on the event I ride :
Not like a trader, scanning anxiously
For landmarks, lest he miss his road and market ;
But like an easy-going traveller
Who knows the beast he rides can find its way.
Nor anxious what to do nor how to think
When in the foreign place I must dismount ;
But doing what each moment in its chance
Opens before me as the inviting thing,
And thinking that in such a world as this
That I have seen and understood tonight,
Everything done will come to end in good,

Known or unknown to me ; for what is done
Is done for ever, and must for ever live
In the addition of the appointed thing
It brings to the world's immortal life in God."

III

The Slave-Shed

Bargaining long since over and dealers gone,
These wretches must await tomorrow's business;
Thomas among them, now indeed a slave
And stall'd with slaves: fetter'd in safe-keeping
While in the town Abbanes went about
The likeliest way to manage with the king
His risky trade and get it off his hands.
And now the shed was closed and barred for the night.

The hot black misery of stifling air
Stank in his throat, and made each breath he took
Deliberate effort will'd against disgust.
Dense as the water is where divers grope
With nostrils pouring blood for deep-sea sponges,
Silence was merciless pressure on his ears:
Not noiseless; many noises came and went
Of shifting chains, despair that could not sleep,
Despair that drowzed muttering and exclaiming:
Each in that dark tunnel an accident
Detacht, distinct, and futile as its cause—
Slavery's movement of its shackled posture:
Silence was still the law, a positive thing

Uninjured by the flight of casual sound.

So this was it ! Here it was now in fact !
Thus had come true that fabulous India
His brave imagination had so often
Grandly and lovingly faced and commanded !
This was his Indian ministry—to stand,
Like any other slave, in his own filth,
Or squat in it, manacled to a post !

But he was not abandon'd ; and not long
In powerless dismay unmoved remained.
For those high spiritual places still
Stood mountainous about his mind, where once
Imagination climbed to breathe great air ;
Whence now to him, thus abject in resentment,
Stirring power came down : as one may see,
On days of thunderous calm among the hills,
In a cliff-darken'd tarn the sultry water
Suddenly move, as though some living strength
Roused in the depth from ancient sleep and turned
Its dragon bulk with an upheaving swirl :
It is the passing of a lofty wind,
That with a stooping stroke has thrill'd the water.
So now, down upon this dull captive mind,
From regions far above intelligence
Swift unaccountable visitation smote
Disturbance shuddering profoundly through it ;
And, moved as though he felt some inner strength
Bestir itself at need, and knowledge given

Not to be judged, accepting his misfortune
Thomas ſtood up inſpired, and prophecied
In his own ſpeech, aloud :
" Tormented by the world, the wiſe man ſaid :
A rock ſtands in the ſea,
And white the anger of water ceaſelessly
Thunders upon that ſtubborn head.
And I heard the noiſe of the water ſay
' Not now, not now, but ſoon enough, ay, ſoon
Thou ſhalt be worn away.'
And I perceived the ſoul within the ſtone,
And that it anſwered the corroding tide :
' Do all thou canſt : have me in thy power :
Deſtroy this body while it is thy hour.
Shall I be injured, I undignified,
Who am my ſoul, and in my ſoul
Am God ? '—Whereat the whole
Inſult of the ſtorming ſea
In one confounding cataract replied,
' What elſe, thou fool, thinkeſt thou I may be ? ' "

At once the temper of things about him changed
Even as the mood within. That horrible ſilence,
Which could devour the life of any ſound
Like hunger of ſome demon beyond death
Preying on helpleſs ghoſts, fled from his brain
And left no more than when a man awakes
From nameleſs ſuperſtition in a dream ;
And in its place, ſtartling clear beſide him,
Taking his heart like a ſweet cry of muſic,

The speech of his own people rang, the voice
Of one surprised by joy, the voice of a girl :
" Master ! my lord ! O they are Hebrew words !
And surely the God of the Hebrews sends thee here ! "—
And Thomas knew his ministry had begun.

And at once knew it challenged. Light had come :
It stole upon him in his darkness there
Like the intention of an enemy.
He turned, and saw where, at the shed's far end,
A lantern hollowed golden cavity
In the black distance ; and presently could note
The blur of glow through yellow panes of horn,
And stalks of long thin light sprouting aloft
Through piercings in the brass up to the rafters,
Giving the moisture there a sparkling touch.
It was the factor strolling on his rounds,
Dangling his lantern overhead to spy
Who talkt so boldly. Thomas, as he came near,
Watcht, with the qualm of anger that accepts
Vile truth from one abhorr'd, the glance of brightness
Flash from the sweating attitude of slaves
And shape their misery to gibing shadows.
Now the man stood, and thrust his peering grin
Out of the cone of dark the flame threw down :
" What, are ye cheery ? And even in your chains
Must ye be still sweethearting ? "—and to the girl
He turned : " Is it a ticklish lass, I wonder ? "
And struck her on the breast. Quick, as she fell
In crouching anguish, clasping the hurt and crying,

The man swung round on Thomas, poising his weight
For a jaw-breaking blow. But Thomas stared,
The fetter'd slave, into that jeering face
A man enraptured: in his ears the sound
Of discord passing with a soaring change
To clarion symphony, and before his eyes
Rivers of flame, a blaze of every color
That takes immortal joy in mortal sense:
For like a moment of the power of God
Anger exulted in him, anger became
The forces of infinities of being
Pouring into him fire and song to make
The life in him one irresistible pleasure;
And this lookt forth upon the quailing man
And killed his spirit. In a snarl of shame,
Squaring his daunted shoulders, he went off;
And Thomas could despise him, and exclaim
"Go, and be carrion for the dogs to eat!"—
Priding himself as if an instrument
Should boast of doing that for which 'twas used.
But at that malediction, even in her pain
The girl's alarm cried warning: "O take care!
Master, be careful! In this haunted land
Who knows what ghastly answer waits on words?"—
But Thomas did not heed; the lofty mind
Had fallen, and lay small and humble now
In deep astonishment, of nothing else
Sensible but of knowing in himself
His Master's miracle.

Darkness again,
And again a slave; and now in worse disgrace
Than ever, she who had hailed him man of God
Whimpering beside him, suffering for his sake:
Finely his ministry had begun with her!—
And thought was wearying in the old round again:
Enslaved, to send him gospelling India!
Just when he should be bold ingenious freedom,
All the disguises of persuasion trying
From courteous reason to denouncing scorn,
He must pretend a trade, and make it good
Preposterously, or else be cruelty's
Mangled and scorcht experiment!—But then
He felt again out of his burning eyes
Power look forth rejoicing, and again
Saw the malignant face go blank with fright,
And the man's menacing strength craze before him
Like a dry thicket charring in wind of fire.

"Ay, if thou hast the will, thou hast the power:
But durst thou have the will?"—To see who spoke
Raising his head, Thomas that instant found
Himself unmanacled, breathing open air,
Alone in starlight with a naked man,
A spectre of gaunt black stature, reading him
Through and through with diamond-shining eyes:
"Art thou not he who said, I give myself
To everything, even to horror?—Come with me,
And see what thou must love; and first behold,
There at thy feet, the life of India."

For scarlet dawn had kindled while he spoke,
And changed, as suddenly as when foundry-doors
Clang open to let out the blinding ſteel,
To the full ſhock of white-hot Indian day.
One giddy ſtride the dazzled Thomas made,
But halted in a ſcattering roar of flies ;
And right before his way ſaw on the ground
A corpſe, a living corpſe.
What man was this,
This feaſt of maggots ? Whose life had it been,
This ſeething flesh the life of India
Was now ſo hideously immortalizing ?
Not that pitiful ruffian whom the power
Incalculable of anger had curſt and bade
" Go and be carrion " ?—And what griſly face
The carcase ſtared with, Thomas moved his gaze
Reluctantly to know. O well he knew,
With heart that ſtumbled in its beat, that face !
His own ! It was himſelf, the death that lay
Indifferent there, breeding this filth of life !
Which as he glared on it, in ſuch a ſwell
And writhing yeaſt of multiplying creatures
Piled up and workt like boiling of thick broth,
That with the motion of the crawling tumult
His ſenſes reeled, and darken'd to a dream
Of every kind of life out of himſelf
Iſſuing. It was utterance of himſelf,
The ſteaming gloom of foreſt where he ſtood ;
Out of himſelf the dreadful life went forth
That filled it with the paſſion, the contrivance,

The patience, of unceasing ravenous instinct:
The leeches in the sopping moss; the flights
Of keening midges; spiders and scorpions
Devising poison; hornets for their grubs
Collecting larders of live catalepsy,
The chafers they with exquisitely crippling
Science had stung; smirking alligators
Waiting at fords and bathing-shallows; tigers
With beautiful bloodthirsty faces questing
Meat that deliciously of hunted fear
Will relish as it tears. Then in a glade
Hundreds of apes in howling ecstasy
Adored the master ape, who loll'd enthroned,
And nodded a sly recognition at him,
Idolized monkey likeness of himself;
And as he past, each bestial devotee
Gave him of his own eyes a sidelong leer.
He fled, but only into viler dream.
For now the life in him, that still went forth
Shaping itself unquenchably, strove to make
Minds that could understand and store their power,
And feel their freedom, knowing they were ruled,
And in the fate they knew they could not know,
Worshipping and imagining, find their home:
And like a soul lockt in an injured brain,
Who hears the agony of its passion cry
Only an idiot's noise detestably chattering,
He saw these minds become the lives of men.
O at length unendurable, to be
This life of India! all the beast in him

Was clean and kindly, matcht with all the man !
What beaſt, unless corrupted to be man's,
Could bear to live like men, habitual dirt,
The ſtench of men in villages, who breathe
Perpetual excrement ? What had he been
Among the beaſts like what he now muſt be,
Now he was fly-blown babies, foul old men
Abusing little girls, malignant crones,
And hopeless famishing toil consoling itself
By sanctifying cruelty and luſt ?
No end to this ? Muſt even marvellous mind
Serve only to elaborate life's evil ?
And never any end ?
And the end came
Like snapping cord. At height of this despair
A ſtroke of flashing change : and now he ſtood
Releaſt, or in delighted bondage now,
With all his life, all sense and thought and mood,
Expecting something unbelievable
Of joy. And there behold it ! There far off
Visible sign of it shone ! where ſtately rock
Clear above savage growth of jungle rose
In noble mound, that on its summit bore
Brightness as white as a descended ſtar.
Now he was nearer ; and the shining grew
Discernible shape and poſture—spires and walls
Mounting in buttreſſt mass and arching grace
To tower supreme in vault and dome : and all
Built of subſtantial luſtre, marble flame ;
So that the place was splendor where it ſtood,

And underneath it, every coign and ridge
Of the grand basalt's black foundation gleamed
Like quicksilver cascading, with continual
Downpour of the light of it. Still it grew,
Dilating till it seemed to fill the earth
With beauty of that carven snowy fire;
And suddenly he perceived what stone it was
That made such radiant masonry: all that wonder
Of intricate towering fabric wrought in light
Was living structure—infinite shining lives
United in one shining symmetry:
Which was himself! Himself the palace now!
And nothing else in all the world beside
But thus to be himself—this heavenly joy
To live innumerable lives in one
Shapely perfection of community,
And be himself the beauty all these made:
Thus to be God, the king that all things are,
And thus to be the kingdom, burning life
Eternally suspended in its form
Of flame's ascension into loveliness;
Or as if music should endure for ever
In a divine conclusion.

The flame shook
And rusht up past him, and the music soared
Whistling higher and higher and shrill'd to a shriek;
And everything shatter'd: and he woke in chains.
The piercing of the shriek was still in his brain,
Though itself had ended, breaking at its height

Above wild shouting of some crowd of men.
Then quiet: then more shouting; and the sound
Was horrified anger now. Somebody flung
The door of the slave-shed open, and grey dawn
Came in with him: the man who brought the slaves
Their mess in buckets, looking if he could find
His fellow there, to startle him with his news.
But the news was so big in him, it must
Be told to someone, though it were only slaves:
How a black leopard with a demon in him
(Everyone said so who had seen his eyes;
They smoulder'd even in daylight) round the houses
Prowling, had caught the factor and cufft him dead
And claw'd his bowels out, before with noise
And stoning they could drive the beast away.
Then, while they all were scaring off the panther,
A horde of starving scavenger-dogs had come
And torn the corpse to morsels.

Thomas heard
This story with a heart that turned to water.
Was it his doing?—"In this haunted land,
Who knows what ghastly answer waits on words?"—
How dreadful the girl's warning sounded now
Across his mind's mechanical repetition,
"Go and be carrion for the dogs to eat"!

The man at the door, before he could make the most
Of the tale he brought, yell'd out, for a scavenger-dog,
With its gobbet fast in jealously snarling jaws,

Came scampering in between his ſtraddling legs,
Escaping from the chase outside. The brute
Ran up the shed to find some corner safety
Where it could gulp its meat; and as it paſt
Thomas, he saw its portion was a hand,
A right hand; and for the moment it went by,
The glance of the scavenger-dog lookt up at him
With a face that grinn'd the likeness of his own.

IV

The King's Chamber

Gundaphorus the King and Gad his brother,
The treasurer, in private audience sat
To hear this merchant's business. A brave face
Abbanes told it with ; and often turned,
As though to vouch the truth of it, half-round
Where stood aside, a pace or two behind,
Unmoved, erect, Thomas his merchandize.

Abbanes. Thus then it was : such is the brief of the matter ;
Thus the good care I took of your commands
Good fortune found. I know not if the man
Will do your business ; but here ends my part :
Here is my carpenter. It is for you
To see if he can fashion as you dreamt.
Pay me a fair price now, and let me go.
Gundaphorus. Gad, what do you make of it ?
Gad. O, rogue's patter !
It rigs no market here for dummy slaves.
Gundaphorus. There's something in this slave, though: he's the man
Of these two.—But would anyone ever have thought
What an ingenious artist gossip is !
A palace made of souls ! That would be better

Than what the bees did for the god, when first
The world was summer, building him a temple
Out of their wings, that fabricated still
Humm'd as they glitter'd honey-color'd light.
A palace made of souls? The very thing
I want, and never yet my mind could say!
And just by thoughtless talking it has been said
Fantastically right—as out of rocks
Nature brings forth a casual amethyst,
Or frost upon wet ground draws ferns of ice
Lovelier than any hand could chase in silver.
—And do you tell me you believed it all,
This prattle about a dream, and a law given
That every cargo bound for India
Must bring me a carpenter? You believed all this?

Abbanes. Here is the proof I did: here is my man.

Gundaphorus. Well: an odd story, but a likely man.—
So thou hast come to India to build
My vision of a palace?

Thomas. Bought and sold
I come to thee, to do as I am bid.

Gundaphorus. Then, if I bid thee, thou wilt build for me

Thomas. Whatever work is given me, I take;
What I can do, I must. I am a slave.

Gundaphorus. I do not know what moves me, but I thi
I'll risk this man.

Gad. It never was your way,
Brother, to count the risk.

Gundaphorus. I have no need.
This is my trade: this is what king-craft is;

And kings can be as practised in their craft
As cobblers, brokers, handiworkers, thieves,
In theirs.

Gad. And gamblers. O I know the tale:
The craft of kings is all in choosing men!
Who questions that? But as it works with you,
I call it gambler's craft: no more than this,
You guess, and take your luck, and try again.

Gundaphorus. No doubt it looks like that. So, when I chose
My treasurer, my luck was in? For there
Certainly I'll not need to try again
While you, my brother, live to hoard for me
And scold my spending. But why now suppose
My luck has left me?

Gad. If you knew your brother,
No luck in that. But here are vagabonds
Nameless, unknown——

Abbanes. Abbanes is my name,
Well known in shipping; and the slave is called
Thomas: a Jew, he tells me.

Gad. You tell me
Your title to him! Who was it sold him to you?

Abbanes. All I can say, a very lordly person.
If he were not a king, he lookt like one;
And things fit for a king, the person said,
He'd taught the slave. Why, when he spoke of them,
The air was full of domes and colonnades,
Porphyry, alabaster, gilding and carving,
Ivory and vermilion, lily-ponds and porticoes—

The slave has every dodge of palace-building
Simply by heart.
Gundaphorus. I knew it! I could see
This was a man who had served great purposes.
Ask him, Gad, if it's guesswork when a joiner,
Sorting his planks, picks out the one just right
For what he has to do, reading the wood
As plainly as you read dockets and accounts.
So I have eyes to read the grain of men,
The seasoning and nature of their timber,
And never need to question how I judge.
I know my trade; and thus I choose this man:
He is my builder.
Gad. And nothing done or said
To test the fellow? Why, at this rate, all
The scamps and sharpers up and down the world
Have but to visit you in plausible pairs,
Slaver and slave, and hold their pockets out:
And I must fill them!
Gundaphorus. O we'll keep the merchant.
Hold him in pawn until his ware is proved,
And crucify him if it fails.
Thomas. No, no!
Not that!
Gad. Ha, does that touch you? Smelt the game,
Have we? I think we've smelt the game.
Gundaphorus. There's none.
When I said that, it only was to throw
A bone for that old mastiff, your suspicion,
To grumble with, and stop his tiresome barking.

But I will please you ; I will test the slave.

Gad. Yes, and find out what skill he has in words !

Gundaphorus. My test shall be for something more than that.

The merchant might be anything : such frank eyes
Have often knavery sitting in the dark
Behind them. But the slave's like you, my brother :
He'ld never make a liar : that needs no test !
But something does.—Thomas, answer me this :
Why dost thou think I need to build a palace ?
I want no story now of thy craftsmanship :
I think thou couldst not bear to face me thus
If it were not something remarkable ;
But tale enough of that will be thy work.
Yet what thy skill is to thy mind, thy mind
Must be to my design. Answer me, then :
And never more, be sure, it were to thee
That thy foundations lay solid and square,
Than now to me thy answer : Why dost thou think
I need to build a palace ?—For it is true
I've sworn to build, be thou the man or no,
What will amaze men's eyes ; true, I proclaimed
That every traveller over sea should ask
For notable craftsmen and persuade them hither,
And chiefly those who knew unusual stone.
For mine should be a palace that not merely
Shapes in familiar gleam its great proportion
Of beautiful reason delicately ornate ;
It should seem made of some new kind of brightness :
Marble that polishes silkier than the sheen

When sea-green barley bends its glistening hair
In windy sunshine above blue-green stalks;
Or fiery crystal, as if molten glass
Had cooled with all its crimson glory in it.—
Be not too much concerned for this: I ask
Nothing impossible; all desire, I know,
Imagines better than it can achieve.

Abbanes. Nay, but the man I bought him of w
loud
About this very matter: some building stuff
Extraordinary the slave knows how to use.

Gundaphorus. How to build palaces of souls, no doubt.
And, Thomas, here's my point. I can suppose
The laughing-matter it has been for thee
To hear this serious merchant-man believe
I'ld purchase thee to build of souls a palace.
But we have had enough what gossip makes
Of me and my desire: for this fool's pate,
For talk of such a starling's tongue as this,
I am a king who has dreamt a dream, and lets
The magic of its nonsense rule his life
Like an enchanted beast. But what am I
To thee?—And gravely now the answer hangs.
How dost thou understand my mind's ambition
To leave some beauty men have never thought of
Decorating the light that looks on India?
Why dost thou think I need to build a palace?
I say, consider how thou wilt answer this.

Thomas. Long since this was considered; and thus
answer.

Abbanes. Take care, Sir, for your brain's sake! You have found
The thing he can do: many a moaning yawn
It has cost me to learn the man can preach.
I'm not to blame: you set him off, remember.
Gundaphorus. Is there no governing this talking sailor
Without we gag him?—Now, Thomas, thy answer.
Thomas. When a man does a thing, what is it he does?
That thing alone, which finishes and goes by,
Or stands as mere achievement in the past?
Nay, in this one thing done, the man becomes
One of the doers of everything that shall be;
For without this, what will be could not be,
No more than next year's apples can be sweet
If this year's summer ripen not the wood:
Even as everything the whole world has been
Enter'd into his deed, and there became
Incarnate spirit fashioning the future.
For everything is One, out of itself
Itself continually creating new:
Not merely endless change, but increment
Perpetual of accumulated being;
Since every act, once it is done, becomes
Immortal being, that out of our hands escapes
To add one more imperishable force
To the whole world's almighty will, like sounds
Of many instruments in fugue concerting
One everlasting music. And thus the world's
Divine reality, its will, goes on

Effecting its unending destiny
Still to enrich itself with what it does,
Still to create new being, which in turn
Becomes creative, and yet still be One.
No wonder then if such a destiny,
Not by mechanic particles, but by souls,
Atoms of self-will'd energy choosing their courses,
Love to perform itself; at every instant
Narrowing itself to the deliberate act
Of conscious spirit. But we, who are this spirit,
Beings in whom the world's creative power
Is consummate, free agents of its will,
Know we are more than the divine world's purpose:
We also are the marvellous power to know
How marvellous it is that we should be,
Nay, that there should be anything at all!
Shall we not then do honour to our part
In this adorable miracle? Shall we not,
Since we are made of such a noble nature
That it can choose, be careful that our deeds
Immortalize that which we most can love?
That which within us we can feel belongs
To a world of mountains made, and magnificer
sea
And lovely grass and clouds and stars and morning;
And not to a world of misery and frustration,
Injustice, idiocy, hunger and disease?
Ay, till we make the world's necessity
Such an increasing strain of beauty still
Creating beauty, that this fearful wonder

Of our existence and the world's become
Wholly our lives' beloved paradise,
Where satisfaction still renews desire
That will be satisfied; and so for ever.
This, if we know ourselves, is in our power:
If from our souls the action we send forth
Like everliving water into the world,
Move like the law of water—infinite change
Of form and light and sound, but yet fulfilling
Always the law its very nature gives,
Whereby to move is to be beautiful.
Such action to the world's eternity,
With such a nature giving it deathless law,
I think thou wouldst contribute: not merely so
That for some centuries of mankind thy work
Shall stand in admiration, but to be thus
A part of what the plastic spirit of man
At last shall make of its existence here,
Transforming both itself and its condition
Into the kingdom of beauty it desires.
Were I thy slave, thus would I understand
The palace thou wouldst have me build for thee.

Gundaphorus. And now thou art my slave! Be mine thy skill,
Even as the secrets of my will are thine!
Then shall we do together, I believe,
Something beyond example.—
Gad, this is in your charge: I have found my man.

Gad. Your man he is: he has it in his marrow,
The way to flatter you.

Gundaphorus. Must you for ever
Mumble the old tune? Listen: I know his art
No more than you——
Gad. O but I know his kind:
Put him where flattery will serve his turn,
He'll do it as instantly, as right to the spot,
As a tickled dog will scratch.
Gundaphorus. Listen, I say.
Whether he is the man to build my vision
How can I tell? But he is the man to try:
That is as bright as diamond. And if he fail,
It shall not be for stinting of the means.
I leave it in your charge. Would I could stay
And watch his craft take hold of my intention,
Making the stone of the earth imagine things
Beyond the nature of earth!—But I must go.
Short work, I hope, my war will be: but cured
Once and for all of insurrection now
Must be those starveling rebels that disturb us.
They breed too fast; there is no cure but slaughter.
Meanwhile, my palace shall not wait on them.
The site is chosen and cleared; you have the money;
Let him begin. Let him use half the cash
You have put by for this. Then, if I still
Am fighting, and the slave's done half the work,
Give him the rest to spend.
Gad. But leagues away
From here the site is! I have no time to go
Rambling back and forth studying swindlers,
And very little mind.

Gundaphorus. No need ; your charge
Is all in this : let not the work lack money.
You'll groan, I know, as wretched as a man
The surgeon handles ; but for all that the slave
Must have your precious savings : out of your bags
And boxes lavish on him all he needs !
Gad. Fortunate slave !
Gundaphorus. No one more fortunate :
The craftsman to the top of his desire
Using his craft !
Gad. And what that craft may be,
No one to question, not an eye to see,
Unless some gang of his accomplices !
Boosing, whoring, swaggering over the land
In a parade of gilded elephants,
Pelting roadside beggars to death with coins,—
O yes, right to the top of his desire
He can amuse whatever scandalous whimsy
The mind of a slave can think of, to contrive
The jovial squandering of unheard-of money
Before he must decamp.
Gundaphorus. It is to me
The strangest thing, how men will stare each other
Full in the face with open eyes, and see
Nothing, because their minds are blind-folded.
But it is no good talking : the thing stands ;
I know this man.
Gad. In a quarter of an hour !
Gundaphorus. A quarter of a minute were enough
For me to know and trust him : look at his brow !—

But I'm a fool. I might as well expect
That ape of mine, because he holds his book
As wisely as a doctor, can take in
The mathematics with his nimble eyes.
Gad. The king must have his way. But you
given
Your word for one thing, and I'll hold you to it:
I am to keep the merchant.
Gundaphorus. O keep him, keep him
Abbanes. But I have business——
Gad. Very pressing business
To study what an art we make in India
Of crucifying.
Abbanes. I withdraw the slave;
It has been all a mistake; he's not for sale.
Gundaphorus. What, when I've bought him? Now
no more noise
About it: take your price and away with you.
Gad. But in my keeping!
Gundaphorus. Anywhere out of this!
Gad. Why so dishearten'd? You'll be paid your price
Abbanes. It will come in for bribing of your jailer
To give me a meal or two.
Gad. I should advise
Bribing the executioner: he's the man
For you to keep good-natured. But the thing now
To make a mark upon your mind is this:
And let it mark like branding upon flesh!
You will go palace-building both together,
You and your friend the slave: you now no longer

The kindly owner, but my overlooker.
See to it that he does good work ! Take care
We get our money's worth ! or crucifying
Will be the finish of your affairs. And mind you
It will be Indian crucifying ! Come,
And what that is, and how long we can keep
Our criminals dying, you shall learn. Come on,
And chat with my executioner a little.

V

The Camp

The news was everywhere: the whole countryside
Stirred like a broken ant-hill: nothing else
But to make sure of this astonishing news
All round about was thought of. But it was
News of misery broken; and not like ants
That run, the frantic little energies,
Exploring how their safety gapes, came in
The troops of skeletons, creeping to learn
If it were true, the unbelievable news:
Famine no more, the starving children fed,
Seed-corn dealt out to start the crops again,
The money-lenders, usury and all,
Paid, and the impossible taxes paid:
The roof of misery over their lives at last
Broken, and decent daylight come again!
Creeping they swarmed, in families and droves,
Whole villages, dauntlessly plodding in
From far and wide across the glaring plain,
The slow laborious haste of pithless limbs
And reeling brains: but no more famishing now!
The king (so the news said), the unjust king,
Whose name had been the demon of their lives,
Had sent a new man, with a mint of money,

To buy them food, and buy them out of debt:
Undoing all his pillaging officers
Had done to them for years: who thinks to ask
Why kings do what they do, this way or that?
Right in those desolate acres, where long since
Space for a palace of a city's girth
The pitiless king had cleared with whips and fire
Of men and habitation—suddenly now
Turning to mercy, there the king set up
His royal charity for all poor men.
Let a man come there hungry, he should feaſt;
And beggary went home with wealth to spend.

Abbanes ſtood in the doorway of the tent,
And wrinkled up his eyes, and into a line
As thin as wire preſt his lips together,
Watching how Thomas, out in the duſt and blaze,
Came ſtriding towards him cheerfully through the camp,
Thrashing a bunch of leaves about his head
To daunt the flies. "Ay, the important man!"
Said gruff Abbanes, screwing his sour grimace:
"The maſter now! And well he knows I know it!
"I never ſtopt to think, when I was a lad
Out adder-hunting, how it might feel to be
The squirming beaſt I had pinned down on the turf
With my forkt ſtick firm on his throttled neck.
I know that now: I'm in the forkt ſtick now,
O fairly between the prongs! That angry prince
Has me on one side: 'You it was,' says Gad,
'Sold us the slave, and you shall answer for it

How the king's money goes.' O, and it goes !
It's going a rare pace ! This crack-brained Thomas
Holds me on his side fast as Gad on the other :
Nothing he'll do but roll out the king's cash
In cheer for paupers, and to make the camp
A kitchen that must hum and smoke all day
Baking and barbecuing for half the world :
If there's a lean man left in India,
No fault of his, after this gormandizing.
But not a show of building : stubborn for that !
Not a day's wage he'll spend to start a trench
Spade-deep, to look as if he meant to build !
No, every penny the king gave must go
In wagon-loads of food and paying cooks
And doles of alms. Well, I can do nothing,
Nothing but squirm between the two of them.
The old adder's in the fork, pincht by the nape
Tight down, till the time comes for back-breaking."

Thomas was near enough to hail him now.

Thomas. We're almost at the end.

Abbanes. What, have you fed
All India full ?

Thomas. No, no : the money, I mean.
I've had it reckon'd against our expense.
It's running out ; we'll have to send for more.

Abbanes. You never will try that ?

Thomas. Why not ?

By this
Thomas was in the tent and at his ease ;

And pleasantly waved Abbanes to a ſtool:
The maſter now! Perfect command the king
Had given him, and he took; clear to be seen
By shrewd Abbanes, as the worn man relaxt
In blessed shadow after the burning air,
The purpose in him never wearying,
However it might toil his flesh and strain
His spirit: to the end it would be served!

Abbanes. Your runner will betray you.
Thomas. But why should he?
For all he'll know, there's nothing to betray.
I'm here the king's lieutenant. Who's to guess
This work of mine is not his policy?
None of our people: I've seen well to that!—
Why, there's a risk: the man may be a gabbler,
And Gad may queſtion. Still, it muſt be ventured,
Or we'll be at a ſtop.
Abbanes. Nay, as for Gad
You may be easy: I'm his security.
Thomas. Yes: and besides it's very like he'll sulk,
Remembering how Gundaphorus put him down,
And told me to his face to send my message
When I muſt have more money. "The one thing is,"
Gundaphorus said, "and I can promise you
Gad shall mind it, let not the work delay."—
Well, and it shall not! We muſt keep on doing,
And here's the thing to do. It muſt be tried.
Abbanes. O surely: lunatics muſt do their duty
Like all the reſt; they are the only men

With the right wits to keep their crazes going ;
Just as it's duty in a hog to root :
He has the snout for it.
Thomas. Do you not even now
See why my master sold me for a slave ?
Abbanes. I wish I did see that.
Thomas. To be a slave !
He has sold me to his deputy, whose word
Must now be good as his.
Abbanes. What, me ?
Thomas. The world :
I serve my lord the world : I am its slave ;
I wait on its event from day to day,
And take that as my lord's commanding nod
Without a question—let it be sense to me
Or nonsense, what the gesture bids me do :
All's one to me.—Look how it all works out !
You ship me here to build the king his palace ;
And he—the nonsense of it, if I had tried
To understand it !—swears I am his man,
Welcomes me, sets me up in power and station :
I who had thought to come to India
As helpless as a ghost among live men,
I am one of its masters ! I am to spend
The king's exchequer—bullion in cart-loads
My luggage when I journey !—What do I know
Of palaces or building ? But I know
When the sign's given, I know my lord's command :
I take the event ; what happens is my will.
So, guarded like a viceroy, off I go

Charged with more wealth than I had ever thought of;
And here, bewilder'd what to do with it,
I come, and camp. And at once it blazes on me,
The thing I am to do with the king's money:
Kill the famine, feed these wretched people!—
It is not what I meant to do. I saw
Myself a priest, and India my altar,
And all the souls of India ascending
In one adoring flame up to my God,
Directed by my worship, heavenly power
In me mighty and manifest on earth.—
But that's not it. The souls are not for me.
I must be kind to bodies, well content
To be the earth I am and serve the earth
Men are, in this absurd and dreadful place
Where into human flesh immortal mind
Proliferates like frogs in putrid water
Spawning the million units of their species.
Yet when I think what to the mind in man
I have in me to give!—that I, who now
Feed starvelings plump, could make them such bright spiri
That in the light of it even death would shine
As friendly as a mirror gleams at a lamp
Entering a dark room!

Abbanes. And now's the time!
Kindle their minds and let them love to die:
There are too many bodies in this country.

Thomas. If it were my affair, there'ld be an end
Of body and mind together,—men and things!
Anyone, anything, any sort of world

Existing is preposterous to me—
O insupportably unnecessary !
But it is not my world : I am the slave
Belonging to it—and we all know how slaves
Jeer in their hearts at the master they obey !
This is my master—a world of dying flesh
Whose passion is to live : and I must serve it.
Abbanes. So, after all your talk, we say goodbye
To gospelling India.
Thomas. Gospel enough,
For men who have been chewing clay, is food.
Men ? They're not men : they are not even beasts,
That come horribly ingratiating
Round me with ravenously beseeching eyes
And lips green with the froth of eaten grass,
Whose joints stare in their pining limbs like knots
In wither'd hemlocks, and their ribs like baskets :
It is to be this, life was put in the world !—
But leave that out. For a little while at least
I can make of these creatures wholesome men ;
A little while the fiend that lives in things,
Misfortune, from this piece of India
I can shut out—my gospel now for men
Your gospel to the rats ! It is not you
Should scorn it.
Abbanes. I scorn nothing in all this world
But being crucified.
Thomas. Why, no one knows
Where what he does will end ; and very often
It circles round to come home where it started

As good as it went out; like on our journey
We heard in that hill-town the evening gongs
Sounding up to the heights, and far aloft
The ringing among woods and rocks prolong'd,
To fall at last in a delicious chime
Back on the listening priest who struck the bronze.
We have done good turns, both of us: you to your rat
I to my Indians. Wait and be quiet;
And something, may be, will come back to us.

Abbanes. I'm sure it will—swoop on our heads, and soor
It will come tumbling back on us, what you are doing:
More like that dangerous morning in the gorge
After we left your village of sweet gongs,
When gingerly we stept and fearfully whispering
Under the leaning scarp of ruin'd mountain,
Where a man's voice in avalanche of stones
Returns on him to brain him: will you not think
At last, that like foolhardy shouting there
You are shaking down on us death?—and the sort of dea
That will amuse an Indian king!

Thomas. And why
Think of it? If it must come, then let it come,
And be the worst it can: I will not help it.
But these must live, and I can give them life:
That is the plain thing here.

Abbanes. And what to you
Are hordes of useless misery like these people?

Thomas. Everything to me! Now like a goad of light
When the sun pierces mist in a deep valley,
That question looks into my inmost mind!

I have it radiant now : everything to me
These wretches are ! What is it I give them
To match what they give me ? To be myself
They give me, which without them I cannot be ;
And a world in which to be they give me : else
As helpless as the fluttering of a moth
That clings against a pane of lamplit glass,
I were a spectre out in the night, in vain
Haunting the golden windows of this palace,
Man's experience : wherein royally now,
Quiet and luminous and secure at last,
I can possess myself and a world my own,
And wait for what's to come. How dark it is
Outside, I know ; but this I know as well,
That I am most myself in what I do,
And more than myself : again it is your word !
To serve these people is to be myself
And to transcend myself. Beyond me it goes
Into the darkness, what I do for them.
But if this marvellous thing be given to man,
That he can freely think of what to do
And do it—shall he not put his trust in this ?
May it not be that some day there will come,
Where there is darkness now, transparency ?
And I shall see to what a magnitude
My act dilates beyond me—to the size
Of my desire I shall enlarge my being !
And this obedience to my lord the world,
My owner now, I shall perceive has been
The word of God—and I the speech of it !

I have had signs of this. And will there be
No change in me ?—With what insane disgust
I loathed this breeding India ! It was
Myself I loathed, and no more knew it than
A felon knows how foully in his jail
He stifled, till he taste fresh air again.
But surely what a man, in spite of death,
Serves, he must love ; and if he love the service,
Must it not be the servant he will love,
Himself at last ? If I could love myself !
Can you conceive what it would be, Abbanes,
To dwell in such a wonder ? Why, it would be
To make this earthly mind a place like heaven !—
But who can tell his dreams ? They only live
In whom they are. Even for the thought of this
There's no intelligence possible in words,
No more than for the coming of the morning
Upon the snows of Lebanon, that all night
Between the forests and the stars have held
Aloft their expectation.—But let come
What will to me : the kingdom of heaven will come,
Whether my work or not : God sees to that.
Mine is to do whatever needs my hand,
And look no further.

Abbanes. Well, my wants are simple.
Let the kingdom of India meddle with me
No more than I will with the kingdom of heaven,
And I'll be satisfied. All I ask is this—
Not to be three days dying on a cross.

VI

The Palace

O now, now at last ! Incredibly now
Every nerve in him knew it was coming at last,
That moment of magnificence for which
All his life had been instinctive longing :
The justifying moment, the perfection
Life can never imagine, never can cease
Expecting—that unspeakable moment when
Enchanted transformation comes revealing
Beauty and order in man's bewilder'd effort,
A divine pattern in confused disgrace :
For Thomas now, lost in this huge India,
The moment which would touch, like a wizard's wand
Giving a scrambling blindworm wings, his desperate
Small attempt to do his Master's work :
Now it was coming, the magnificent moment,
Now, incredibly now ! What it would be
Was blank as ever ; but its tremendous coming
Now he could feel as plainly as when a man
Hears in the air above him louder and louder
The shrill resounding whisper of the speed
Of a flock of birds, although what birds they are,
So high their dazzling flight, he cannot tell.

He must be alone for this. Out of the camp
He ſtole before the light could caſt a shadow ;
And by the time morning had soakt the ground
With fire, so that the air that lay on it
Quiver'd like colorless flame busily mounting,
Alone with fragrant pines and scorching rocks
He ſtood, where the hills thruſt upon the plain
Their firſt abrupt of promontory height :
And of his journey thither knew no more
Than when a dream changes the place of its ſtory.

And see ! the warning had come juſt in time !
Barely he had escaped ! For looking down,
Behold the camp surrounded—ſteel and brass
Of sparkling infantry in circular
Manœuvre closing in, and, scouting round,
Skirmishes of cavalry : and already
The pitching of some notable commander's
Spacious quarters, a great four-square tent
Of gorgeous linen glowing mulberry-purple
On the grey ground ; and the tall corner-poles,
Alight with leaf of gold, were spikes of fire.

Easily guesſt what this might mean ! At laſt
His doings had been heard of : and the prince,
The jealous treasurer, Gad—O in his mind
Thomas could see the picture of the man,
His pleased and bitter angel !—Gad himself
Had come with soldiery to take the squanderer.

He laught a little : " Well, they have misſt me !
But they have caught Abbanes." And at once
His mood ignored the matter—everything
His mood ignored but how to make itself
The equal of the moment it awaited ;
For not unless his spirit upward ſtrove
Far above earth as down from heaven ſtoopt
The marvellous promise, could the twain unite
In blissful myſtery of experience,
His soul receive the event, the event his soul.

But when the daylight cooled, the twain were one.
Now inconceivably content and quiet
He let his careless survey scan the plain
Once more.—What ! the King too had come ?
Not only Gad, Gundaphorus in the camp !
For from the north, the dust of a great army,
The trampling of ten thousand horse and foot,
Elephants and artillery, baggage and wagons,
Traverſt the evening, holding the ruddy light
Like rolling smoke of a torch, and across the plain
Crawling enormous like the ghoſt of a dragon.

So this was why so clearly he had known
The coming of the moment ! Death was coming :
For what he saw beneath him on the plain
Was death for him, unmiſtakable death ;
And when a soul, in its profound foreboding,
Is sensitive of death, then it puts forth
Its rareſt, delicateſt faculty

For life. Thus, as if one should feel the air
Shiver with far-off motion, he had felt
The heavenly moment's coming breathe on him
A stir of spiritual element;
And thus no sooner had the moment come
And caught him up, like the prey of an eagle,
Into the loftiest brightness life can know,
Than there must be an end of life for him.

And justly: for such feasted life as his
What reckoning could pay but life itself?—
The reckoning must be paid; but first the feast
Shall be enjoyed!
"Not yet will I go down.
This hour is mine; I claim it mine by right;
Then let the world claim what it likes of me!—
And I could never have believed
How small an apparition death
Looks from the height of such an hour as this!
"I cannot understand it. Have I not failed?
What have I done of all I meant to do?
Nothing, I have done nothing:
And with this infinite joy I am rewarded!
"Was I sent here for this? Was it for this
I gave myself to India, renounced
My dignity, my reasoning will,
And to the chances of the world
Absolute slave became;
Whatever pressure they might urge on me
Accepting as my motive, knowing myself

The hand that must obey the thought,
And the inscrutable world the thought
That cannot but express the will of God ?
Not to serve my Master's gospel,
Not to make India, as I supposed,
A province of his power upon earth ;
But simply of myself, of my own being,
Marvellously to make
This infinite of joy,
That centred here in personal delight
Glories beyond dimension.
" How can I understand it ? And what need ?
Nothing remains but to be what I am
Now, in this present hour :
Nothing is left for me to think or do,
Nothing to wonder,
Nothing but blissfully to live
Over and over again my heavenly moment ;
In fiery consciousness that clasps itself
Round and round like coiling of a snake
In complicated circles of delight,
To know and know and utterly to know,
Here in my soul,
Here in this infinitesimal point of being,
Life that says, life that on earth can say,
' I am the Kingdom of Heaven.'—In front of that,
Death is nothing, all the world is nothing."

Meanwhile, down on the plain, the darkening hour
Had filled the great pavilion of the prince

With gloom, and changed its purple royalty
To blackening sombreness. Nobody there
Of torches thought, though it was torchlight-time.
The grave attendants, who all afternoon
Cautious of any noise had moved, and spoke
By signs or in curt murmurs, now quite still
And silent stood, as men will do who feel
The affairs to which their lives belong at last
Pause before catastrophe. Thus absorbed,
They watcht, amid the twilight of the tent,
Heart-sick Gundaphorus talk with Gad's physician.

Gundaphorus. But still, he lives.
Physician. It may be said, he breathes
Gundaphorus. Then, if he breathes, some pier cordial
May reach his spirit and rouse it from its swoon.
Physician. Only because I have seen, holding the mirr
Close to his lips, cloud on the lucid steel
The faint white shadow of the soil of vapor—
Only by that I know breath issues from him.
It is the last of life in him—if the name
For lying senseless, mindless, motionless,
Be life. Call it not life, for fear that word
Deceive you into hope. The name for this
Is dying.
Gundaphorus. Yes, if you let him die, it is !
Try everything again—your drugs, your fumes,
Your chafing—all the experiment of your art :
He must not die !

Then Mardes the physician brought the king
Beside that bed where the white linen lay
Moulded to effigy of the ailing man
As ſtark and ſtill as ſtatuary marble ;
And faced him with the ruthless honeſty
Of skill defeated.
hysician. No more authority
Has my art here than you with all your love.
Look, from the ſtalk of a dove's breaſt-feather
I nip the plume of down that closeſt grew
To the bird's heart, and tendereſt to its warmth :
Such filigree of membrane that the mind
Cannot but fall in love with it—so light
The touch of it is nothing ; it feels no more
Upon my palm than the insensible air.
Bend down, now ; look—there is juſt light enough—
Look close—but carefully ! the smalleſt wind
Of the motion of a sleeve would send it flying.
I lay it right across his lips : and see
Now what his breathing is ! There's no force here
Even to rock this flimsy curl of a thing,
No, nor to make one tendril hair of it quiver.
Juſt so my skilfulleſt fingering can find
Not the leaſt trembling thread of moving blood,
Though ſtill his flesh is warm with it.—Torches ! Quick,
Bring torches ! Why are we fumbling in the dark ?
He is not warm ! His skin is cold as metal !

Imperceptible in the dusk had been
The fatal alteration. But when flames

Hurried about the bed, and light was glaring,
The strange and fortunate tranquillity
Of the face of a dead man rebuked the stare
And vain officious thronging of alarm.
A little while, before his vengeance turned
Grimly on the physician, the king stood
In musing sorrow over the face he loved—
O lovable beyond all bearing, now
Life had been cleansed from it like imperfection!

Gundaphorus. My brother! Bitterly now I understand
How wonderful the meaning of that word:
My grief for ever now its loveliness!
Wilt thou forget me, where thou art gone?—But I
Have nothing left but to remember thee.
—Why did he die? Why did you let him die?
What was this malady you could not cure?
If I should say, your talkative ignorance
Killed him, what would you answer?
Physician. That he was killed
By you.
Gundaphorus. Do you think senseless impudence
Will do you any good?

But Mardes knew,
The wary man, how dangerously he stood:
He must be heard; and very well he knew
Injustice only listens to injustice,
Only can hear, above her own harsh voice,
A voice as harsh again.

Physician. Am I to blame
That Gad lies dead because the world he served
Dealt him a mortifying wound? I tell you,
If you must have a culprit for his death,
Look to yourself: on you the sentence falls.
Gundaphorus. You say again, I killed him?
Physician. If you say
My negligence was his death. Suppose it thus:
A man climbing a mountain kicks from its poise
A boulder; down in the valley far below
The last hazardous bound of its plungeing strikes
A passenger there. Dying there, I find him;
I tend him all I can. And then suppose
My mountaineer comes striding down and cries
'Why did you let him die?' should I not answer
'Why did you kill him?'
Gundaphorus. O be plain with me:
What have I done?
Physician. Why did you turn aside
Hither your homeward march? Answer me that,
And you are answer'd why you found your brother
Broken-hearted.
Gundaphorus. No! You do not mean
My palace?—O that unforgivable Jew!
I had forgotten. But is it possible
This could be such an injury?
Physician. There are men
Whose passion still to serve the lives they love
Gathers their forces like a burning-glass.
Gad was of these. As if the whole of his spirit

Lived in a single glowing point collected,
The man was one ambition : to amass
Whatever could be lopt by tribute, tax
And tithe could whittle, impost and excise
Could pare and scrape, all in one grand treasure,
For you to build the palace of the world.
You took it from him ; to a slave you gave it,
A promising slave. Where will you look for it now,
That wealth which Gad made it his life to give you ?
Where will you look for dust the wind has taken ?
No injury, this ?—And gangrene in the wound
To think of you, you his beloved brother,
Cheated and shamed, the talk and scoff of nations.

Gundaphorus had it now : it came on him
Like a wild beast escaping from a cage,
What he had done.

Gundaphorus. Then it was I who killed him !-
All this while I have had that in my mind ;
But it was down so deep, and loathed itself
So horribly, it could not bear to leave
Its darkness, and be thought. Yes ; I killed him.
We loved each other—and there is no love
In all the world like the love of brothers—
And I have killed him.—What eager haste I made,
Still in the splendid mood of my campaign
Against half-hearted rebels, to see my pride
Complete, my power upon men fulfilled,
My palace built ! I found my trusty slave
Absconded, nothing done, my treasure used

Like rubbish ; and I found my brother dying.
I thought it mere unreasonable misfortune,
That first my pride was given mockery
To feast on, then my love calamity :
If chance strike once haphazard, why not twice ?
I would not think, all this was my own doing ;
I durst not see, that having once committed
My wilful folly to the merciless
Mechanical logic of events, I had
In one result contrived my own disgrace,
And killed my brother.

Physician. You may be sure of this :
Not half the cause of what a man effects
Is what he does ; the rest is pure mischance.
Action is always haunted : do what we please,
A fiend slips in to mind the mischief in it.
So here. Certainly when your runner brought us,
Down in the city yonder, your great news
Of mutiny overcome, but brought besides
Breath of the rumor he had travelled through—
As one who has past through wild fire in the jungle
Comes with the smell of noisome smoke upon him—
The flaring story how day after day
Your Jew was gorging thousands of the people,
Any vile rabble that might herd about him,
As free to make your wealth their gluttony
As forest pigs a windfall of wild plums :
Certainly then Gad sicken'd in his anger
Like a man poisoned. But this askt no more
Than vengeance to be cured ; and fiercely Gad

Set out to take it. But the seeds of death
Are everywhere, scatter'd perpetually,
Lodging invisibly, and quick to prosper
Wherever troubled life gives broken ground
For their fertility. Some deadly seed
Faſten'd in the vexation of Gad's nature:
Corrupting there so luſtily, the whole man
Was drawn into its blazing growth before
Our journey had well begun. All the way here
His flesh consumed in fever, and his mind
In rage againſt your Jew. No pause by day
For reſt or bait, no camping for the night;
But night and day relays of litter-bearers,—
Weeping with sweat at noon, and ſtumbling on
Through darkness as the trotting linkmen's flares
Made rapid shadows cross the crimson ground,—
Muſt groan and ſtrain to keep the pelting pace
He cried for, only living to enjoy
His juſtice on the spoilers of the wealth
That should have beautified the world for you.
But that insatiable flourishing of disease
Devoured him to the end, both flesh and mind.
Parcht like a mummy, nothing alive in him
But a passionless whisper of "Bring me the Jew!
Where is the Jew?" repeated and repeated,
We laid him here to die. But though we had
From dawn the camp surrounded, the slippery Jew
Escaped us.

Gundaphorus. But I will have him yet, or else
Never again will I be called a king.

Physician. We caught the merchant, though.
Gundaphorus. Bring him me here.

They brought Abbanes fetter'd; and the king
Some moments lookt at him without a word,
And then spoke quietly; but his eyes burned.

Gundaphorus. Why has your friend deserted you?
Abbanes. My friend?
Queer friendship, his. But truly I never thought
The man would bolt.
Gundaphorus. No? What was the plan, then?
Abbanes. My plan, when there is nothing to be done,
Is always this: do nothing.
Gundaphorus. But you were here
To overlook the work of him you sold?
Abbanes. So I did overlook him, like a man
In the top of a tree who overlooks the work
Of a rogue elephant among the crops.
Gundaphorus. What, so unmanageable was the slave?
Abbanes. You had put everything into his hands.
Gundaphorus. Tell me, do you remember well the day
You sold him me?
Abbanes. I do.
Gundaphorus. And what I said?—
"We'll keep the merchant till his ware is proved;
If he has swindled us, we'll crucify him"?
Abbanes. Yes; and if I had thought you would say that
You never would have had the chance to buy him.

Gundaphorus. You knew him faulty? Then why did y
sell him?
Abbanes. Well, I'd been fooled myself: I'd paid for hi
Gundaphorus. How fooled?
Abbanes. First, that I had it in my head
I was bound to bring you a carpenter; and next,
That he was one.
Gundaphorus. You scoundrel, was he not?
Abbanes. No more than I'm a farmer.
Gundaphorus. Yet you bought him?
Abbanes. That was a trick to get him shipt to India.
His master workt it on me.
Gundaphorus. What was this master?
Abbanes. Head of a mystery. You know the sort:
Inventors who have reason'd out new gods;
They preach, and gather colleges, and send
Gospellers out. This Thomas was to give
Some god to India.
Gundaphorus. Did he this?
Abbanes. Not he:
As much good he has been to you or me
As to his master.
Gundaphorus. What is it he has done?
Abbanes. The people here were starving when we cam
Now they are fat.
Gundaphorus. Feasted on my money!
Well, I have you at least. You sold the slave;
You were put here to oversee his duty;
And now you answer for it.
Abbanes. Yes. There has been

Bad luck on me in this deal from first to last.
Gundaphorus. The last is still to come.

But from the door
Noise like the scuffle of contending men,
And the indignant tone of words that seemed
Forbidding someone, now broke off their talk:
Thomas came in, and after him the guards
Whom he had put aside; and from their looks
It could be seen they were afraid to hold him.
For one keen instant, what the soldiers feared
Gundaphorus knew, in the startling of his heart
As Thomas faced him: but soon recollected
His anger and his wrongs, and who he was.

Gundaphorus. My trusty slave? They told me you had escaped.
Thomas. But now I have come back.
Gundaphorus. Well, it is true
My hunters would have run you down at last.
Look there! (And the king pointed to the bed.)
I would have ransackt the whole earth for you.

Thomas lookt gravely where the dead man lay;
Then, altering not a muscle in his regard,
Gravely lookt at the king.
Thomas. Is it the prince,
Your brother?
Gundaphorus. This was not what you thought to find
When you came back—was it to fawn for mercy?—

Not this, and the justice I will have for this !
Thomas. No. Yet I might have known the man would
He was against me.
Gundaphorus. And is against you still :
A dreadful adversary now you'll find him.—
But I am curious why you have come back.
Thomas. You had Abbanes in your hands.
Gundaphorus. I have
Abbanes in my hands ; and my hands know
What to do with him.
Thomas. But the guilt is here,
In me : none of it his, it is all mine.
Gundaphorus. I think nothing of that. The prince is d
One man I had on whom that could be wreakt :
Now I have two.—Why did you take my money ?
You never thought of building : why did you take
The money that I meant to use so nobly,
And waste it upon beggars ?
Thomas. But they were starving.
Gundaphorus. Starving ? And who but they had beer
worse
If they'd all starved to death ? What I intended
Would have increast the spirit of mankind
In riches and delight : and this you have
Destroyed. But answer me : you did not know
Famine was here, nor how these wretched peasants
Would worship you for flinging them my money :
Why take it at the first ?
Thomas. I know why now :
To feed your starving people.

Gundaphorus. And rob me!
Thomas. 'Twas not for me to say what I must do
And what refuse. No liking or misliking,
Honesty or dishonesty for me:
The thing I saw I had to do, I did.
Gundaphorus. And was it nothing that I trusted you?
Thomas. Nothing: but that it was so, bitterly
I could have hated--O and much besides!
Gundaphorus. Was there no reason at all in what you did?
Thomas. Reason! Excellent reason—but not mine,
Nor yours, I think. I came to India
Against all reason; and you gave your palace
Into my charge, clean against all reason.
What should I make of this? What part for me
But to accept?—However the road went,
Straight on or roundabout or leading nowhere,
So it was at my feet plain open road,
It was the road for me.
Gundaphorus. And now where are you,
Now you have gone to the end of it?
Thomas. Where I can
Give you what I should think a king would count
Very great gain.
Gundaphorus. What have I gained by you?
Thomas. Your people, who were miserable, are happy.
Gundaphorus. Have I gained that? It is what I have lost,
My palace! Never shall I now bestow
The beauty I had thought of on the world!
And you it was, though in pretence you spoke,

Showed me, like blowing to clear flame a spark,
How every purpose that accomplishes
The beauty that is now, lives on in man
Creating beauty that shall be for ever.
Thomas. I only said what I was given to say,
As afterwards I did what I was given.
But I know now, time will not bring to man
His perfect beauty. If it can be at all,
Its immortality is on us now.
Gundaphorus. Did you learn this by squandering
wealth
On mangy peasants?
Thomas. Everything I have,
I have from them.
Gundaphorus. And chief of all the things
You have from them is this: you killed my brother.
Thomas. If that be true, then one man's death has paid
For many lives.
Gundaphorus. The price is not complete;
It shall be three men now.—You must have known,
Even while your villagers were hailing you
Deliverer, and stroking their full bellies,
It would be death for you, when I found you out?
Did you not think of that?
Thomas. I cannot remember.—
Why, of a thing so plain I must have thought;
But I would scarcely notice thinking it.
What else could be?—If I had not seen that,
It would have counted nothing, what I did.
Gundaphorus. Do you despise your life?

Thomas. Despise my life?
Not what my life is now, now here I stand
At the end of life. If it were mine to say,
I would not lose the least regarded moment
Of my life here, of being part of the earth,
So lovely now to me, nay, now by me
Adorable, every color and sound
And motion of my fortune to belong
So finely to its exquisite commonwealth.
But think, when man loves woman, how he longs
Not merely the beloved face to worship,
To enjoy her body and delight in her mind,
But to possess the spirit he divines
Beyond his love, the spirit these disguise.
And it will be the spirit of the life
I love, that I shall enter when I die.
Gundaphorus. If you are still yourself, after your death!
Thomas. Myself! myself! what care I for myself
Here or hereafter? I am beyond all that.—
But it is indescribable, what life
Has now to me become. Enough for you,
The man who took your wealth and wasted it
On beggars, stands before you to be judged.

"The prince! Look at the prince!" a voice cried out,
The high and frighten'd accent of it striking
Sharp as metallic sound into their brains:
"The prince! he moves his hand! he is lifting his hand!
Look! And I heard him sigh for breath!"—"You
fool,"

Muttering deep and rough Mardes replied,
" It was some wavering of the torches made
A flicker in the shadows."
But it was true :
Before them all, fixt as they turned to gaze,
The dead man raised his hand and beckon'd with it.
Into the mask of death there came again
Living emotion : and clear and low he spoke.

Gad. Send for the king ! O quick, quick ! Send for hir
Gundaphorus. Gad, I am here ! Gad, I am close beside yc
Kneeling here, it is I who hold your hand.
Gad. Give me this last thing now, Gundaphorus.
Gundaphorus. O live, live, and what will I not give you
Gad. Living or dead, I beseech you, give me
What I shall ask.
Gundaphorus. O Gad, what can I give you ?
Gad. Swear you will give it me.
Gundaphorus. Yes, yes, I swear.
Gad. Swear it is mine ; swear you will not refuse
When you know what I ask, and take it back.
Gundaphorus. It is yours, yours : what is it you wo
have ?
Gad. Give me your palace.
Gundaphorus. What ?
Gad. You have sworn to it !
Give me the palace which the Hebrew slave
Has built for you.
Gundaphorus. O Gad, you do not know !
There is no palace.

Gad. I tell you I have seen it !
And you have given it to me.
Gundaphorus. You have seen it ?
Gad. I was alone, and weeping for misery and loneliness
Loſt in a moſt desolate place ; neither light nor darkness
Nor any other creature : nothing but my misery
Motionless, forlorn, where time and change abandon'd me
Exiſtence deserted me, all but my own unending
Lonely lamentation, unseen, unheard, forsaken.
I said, If only I could be increasing agony,
O how I would bless it, not to be the same for ever !
And when my timeless anguish had been like ten thousand
years,
I was answer'd, Thy wretchedness by this shall be increaſt,
That thou shalt see what loveliness of bliss might have
been thine,
Hadſt thou bespoken there, where all ages and all worlds
Are one everlaſting community, thy dwelling.
And I beheld a palace ; and I was, as I beheld,
The joy of the ſtructure of its beauty, as in delight
Of music a man's mind becomes the music he delights
in.
I was the shining, the carving, the shapeliness
I loved to behold : but only a beholder,
Permitted for a moment ! And who could be the owner,
I askt, of such a palace ? Whose habitation ?
Then I was answer'd, Gundaphorus thy brother
Has had this built for him : his Hebrew slave has built it :
He has not seen it yet, nor knows how beautiful it is.
Then I, Let me go to him ! Release me, for he loves me :

Let me go back to the life of earth again
And beseech him till he gives me his palace to be mine
And mine it is: I have
Your oath that it is mine.
For this they let me come to you again.
Tempt not my love, that now
Lives with the power in things,
To change to wrath if you revoke your word.

And instantly, like blowing out a lantern,
Out of him went the life: out of his face
The imploring passion, out of all his limbs
The tension; and again upon the bed
A dead man lay, imperturbable flesh.

But the king, kneeling still, stared up at Thomas
And yearned to cry to him; but his mind could make
No language and his breath no voice, like one
Who strives to live after the stroke of thunder.
And taller than a man the Thomas seemed
Who now with more than presence of a man
Glowed down on him, saying—but not to him:
Rather as one who looks down on the child
Concerning whom he speaks—"O Master, now
I understand! At last I understand!
Not to be mine thou gavest me my heaven,
But to make this man thine—all India thine
Under the favor of his high example!
Thus shall the work be done which seemed to fail;
So that shall have no end which I supposed

Had come to end in me."
Then in his voice
Commandment spoke, and seemed to speak divinely :
" Gundaphorus, you have heard it from your dead
What I have done : yes ! I have built the palace.
Stand up : when I have shown it to you, then
It will be time to kneel."
As if that word
Releast him, eagerly sprang the king upright
And threw his arms out-stretcht to Thomas, crying
" Give me my brother back to life again ! "

Thomas. O no !
Gad now has enter'd the perfection of death.
Not to disturb the safety of dead men
Was I sent here, but to make living men
Secure in life as Gad is now in death.
Gundaphorus. And what, to be like the dead, must we who live
Receive from you ?
Thomas. A gift which is to life
What life is to the flesh : for you shall live
Where Gad is now.
Gundaphorus. In the palace you have built ?
O tell me what it is ! Can living eyes
Light on it ?
Thomas. All the sense and mind and zeal
Of life shall dwell there.
Gundaphorus. Nay, how can it now
Ever be mine, now on my oath to Gad

I have given it away ?

Thomas. It is yours still.
Gad in his death beheld the kingdom of heaven,
And there your palace. But the kingdom of heaven
Is for the living also; and where it is,
Your palace stands. Enter me, and find it !
Your palace is in me; for now in me
Life is the kingdom of heaven. Become my life,
And be the lord of the palace I have built.

Gundaphorus. What is your life ?

Thomas. A palace made of souls.

Gundaphorus. A palace made of souls ? Then that wa
true !

Thomas. And it is yours: you have the right to it.
You were the cause of it; you trusted me:
Out of the charity that fed your people
And had their blessing, have I built the palace:
Beauty which whosoever shall behold,
He shall become the beauty he beholds.

Gundaphorus. And you can show it to me ?

Thomas. If I can show you
What it is to be living in this world !—
But to learn that, my Master you must learn:
It is the life he gave me you must enter.—
Who has not felt, though it might be no more
Than shadow of a phantom at high noon,
The shuddering thought, If it were possible
This life of mine should be a soul alone,
The momentary spangle in the dark
Of its own useless littleness of light !—

This is the furthest end of misery
Life can look to ; and the most blessed life
Is the most opposite : spirit which lives
Divining everywhere perceiving spirit,
The answer to itself ; which as it knows
Itself experience the whole world gives,
Knows that itself is to the whole world given.
That man shall bless his life, who understands
In everything that is the living creature,
Experience that each by each is shaped
As a crag shapes the moving of the waves
About its base, and by the waves is shaped :
A universe of lives, infinite world
Of mutual structure of experience ;
So to know this that in his life he dwells
The conscious image of that universe
Where each in all and all in each must live ;
And loves to give the best exchange he can
For what he takes ; and finds, the more he gives,
The lovelier grows the world his life receives :
Ever brighter the concourse in his soul
Of the whole kind of creatures, ever more nobly
In one majestic architecture made,
Ever more glorifying the soul that lives
Imaging all this beauty ; until he says,
This is the Kingdom of God, and what am I
Who dwell in it ?—Then into himself he looks,
And round the central splendor of his soul
Perceives what boundless region thence expands,
Darkening into terrible distances :

Yes, and far off, ghosts of abomination,
And mysteries of evil threatening him
Ten times more fearful than the world could be
Before he loved it. Dreading then himself,
Outward again he turns his mind to look
Upon his kingdom, land and sea and stars,
Flowers and beasts and men—the lovely world
Like anguish strikes its loveliness into him;
He is the beauty he sees; and suddenly knows
The two infinities that make the world—
Infinite number of spirits in their life
Of power on one another, and each spirit
Infinite substance: the kingdom and the king!
Then, feeling himself one substance with all being,
Again he looks within: and instantly
Consumes in his own soul's unthinkable
Immense of light; and for one heavenly moment,
Himself the kingdom and himself the king,
He is the glory of God and God in his glory.
The moment ends: but like perpetual dawn
He lives thereafter; the palace where he dwells,
This structure of the souls of all the world,
Instinct, like early morning air with gleam
Of rose and beryl, hyacinth and silver,
With the continual morrow of the king
Returning to his kingdom.

Gundaphorus. And how shall I
Become this life, and such a gift receive?

Thomas. It shall be given as you give yourself:
Of which let music be the parable.

Beautiful is the sound of strings and pipes;
More beautiful the melody in the mind
Made of the sound; most beautiful of all,
Voices of viols and harps, trumpets and flutes,
Dulcimers, horns, consenting one with another,
And melodies in these voices each on each
Conferring grace, each its own loveliness
Elaborating in concord with the rest,
All to achieve one perfect amplitude
Of manifold music, a single dignity
Of shapely intellectual delight.
But only as the listener gives himself
In spiritual understanding to it,
The charm of sense-enchanting instruments
Can give his mind their melody, his soul
The beautiful congress of their melodies.
Make this your parable of the world, and take
Me for the witness: teeming India
At first in mere detestable confusion
Smote on me overwhelming, as on a man
Escaped from shipwreck, just as he wades ashore,
The suffocating downfall of a wave
Huger than all the danger he has past.
It seemed the insane invention of a fiend,
This Indian lust of self-devouring life:
Yet it was but my horror of the darkness
In my own soul, looking forth and finding
Its horrible black answer in the world.
And when I gave myself to serve the world
And love the horror of it (for so had done

My Master, and so, for love of him, must I)
My mind was quicken'd into shining power
That could encounter with the tyrannous world,
Even what I most abhorred, this India ;
And, as if music crystallized in fire,
The world became a palace for my soul.
And then the miracle ! I loved myself !
Ay, for I lived in beauty which to know
Is to become : the pest of wicked ghosts
That haunted round about my soul was killed
As light twilight illusion kills, when all
The world was mine, and I was all the world's.
For then I knew myself that heavenly substance
Which the dead are, to which all past event
Returns immortal, taking its delight
Here to be life, and to behold itself :
This world is its beholding of itself.
So life can see the glory which we are,
And for one lightning moment whose the glory ;
But in that moment is the life of life :
To be the kingdom is to be the king,
And we are justified in our existence.
Now therefore what my Master made my life
I will make yours : his word shall be your mind,
Your will shall be the meaning of his word.
And you shall find that when you love the world
As he requires of you, you have your palace ;
And having that—O then for you there comes
The miracle of this world : you love yourself.
But what that means you cannot now conceive.

Gundaphorus. You are to be the master here, and I
Simple obedience : so far at least
Admonishing me, Gad's message I can read.
In you your Master is mine. But something still
I am : I am the king of India ;
And like the shadow of my humility
Before you now, all India to receive
Your Master waits.
Abbanes. Then, in this turn of things,
Have I my freedom ?
Gundaphorus. Have I your forgiveness ?—
Undo his chains !—Your freedom ? Ask me all
The honor you can think of, it is yours.
Great shall be now your part in our new life.
Abbanes. Let me get back to my ship ; let me be sailing.
There's no new life at sea, and never will be,
And I want none : I'm a sea-faring man.
Give me again bright weather and fresh wind,
And the green water that my prow treads white
Leaping on board in rainbows—I'll forget
You landsmen yearning for the life of life.
Thomas. Yes, let him go. He knows not what he is.
He has the secret native in his heart,
Which the sea and the wind have in their motion,
And the sun in its shining.—But, Abbanes,
Remember me sometimes. At white midnight,
In fair midsea, when all the ship's asleep
But you and those small chirping friends of yours
Making their merriment—will you not then
A little think of me ? For if you do,

I promise you, you shall feel strangely happy :
You will feel blessing you my gratitude,
That all your life will follow where you go
Like a devoted spirit, quick at the least
Thought of me, to be sweetness in your mind.

Printed in Great Britain by
LOWE AND BRYDONE (PRINTERS) LTD., LONDON, N.W.1.

P9-BMB-143